



Government of Italy

Item 6 b) Environmental finance and partnerships to support the implementation of environmental policies and programmes

Keynote address delivered by
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Ms Madame Chair, Ministers, Excellences, distinguished delegates,

Since Johannesburg WSSD, a number of partnerships have been launched as Type II initiatives as new instrument and approach supporting countries efforts in achieving sustainable development objectives.

Some of these partnerships have developed and delivered concrete results representing reference models to be further implemented and this occurred especially when partnership involved a broad range of actors at different levels of responsibility.

Partnerships among different levels of stakeholders are ideal fora for identifying needs, priorities and concerns and for discussing and promoting new ideas and new tools for achieving sustainable development.

¹ The present document is a scanned copy of a statement received on 11 October 2007 during the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007). The document has not been formally processed by the UNECE.

The International Mountain Partnership is successful example of these partnerships as it provides a framework for regional and sub regional initiatives that have also brought to the development of stronger commitment through Multilateral Agreements.

25% of world territories and 23% of European territory is mountainous and mountains are very vulnerable and an essential reserve of biodiversity, of fauna and flora, freshwater and other natural resources as well as high risk of their overuse.

We strongly believe that partnerships are essential for sustainable management of mountains especially for transboundary ones and I would like to bring to your attention on the results achieved by some existing partnerships and the potentials of others that might come up in the near future according to the same models.

The Alpine Convention was the first regional Convention created worldwide for the protection and sustainable development of a mountain region involving 7 alpine countries, their local authorities, NGOs and the European Community. Since the seventh meeting of the Alpine Conference, the Contracting Parties have supported the establishment of mountain partnerships outside the alpine area (focused in the Carpathians, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans) and since then we include this activity in our multi-annual work programme.

The Alpine Convention, since 2003 is not anymore the only regional Convention for the sustainable development of mountainous regions.

In fact, at the last "Environment for Europe" Conference, held in Kiev in May 2003, we all witnessed the signature of the Carpathian Convention by the seven countries and I'm please to underline that the convention has already entered into force on the 4th of January 2006.

Italy, since the beginning, played a major role in supporting an Alpine-Carpathian partnership which was facilitated by UNEP. The Carpathians are the ideal prosecution of the alpine arc and are the largest mountain range of Europe and that is why the Alpine countries, and several players of the Alpine convention decided to support the efforts of the seven Carpathian countries involved in the negotiation process.

This positive result of the negotiation process demonstrates the high commitment of the Carpathian central and local government and the active participation from civil society in the safeguarding the cultural and natural heritage of this region. In particular, these mountains are particularly suffering from loss of biodiversity due to climate change. So I think it is really important and we should welcome that the countries are already negotiating a Protocol on the Conservation of the Biodiversity in this region. Development of this region should take into consideration the necessity of preserving the richness of biodiversity and of natural resources also for the future generations.

With this spirit Italy is continuously supporting UNEP in facilitating an intergovernmental consultation process among the countries of the Balkan Peninsula as requested by my colleague the Minister of the Environment and Physical Planning of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The draft convention text prepared by UNEP with the support of the European Academy in Bolzano and the REC in a real spirit of open participation was already discussed by the countries.

Similarly, we hope that the ongoing consultations between the six Caucasus States for the creation of the basis for the development of a framework agreement for the protection and sustainable development of the mountain regions in the Caucasus would conclude successfully.

We believe that the EfE Conference could represent a further step by facilitating the development of the process of cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions in SEE on the basis of the experience gained in the Alps and in the Carpathians.

I would like to underline the importance these two processes and that's why I want to express my willingness that the SEE and the Caucasian countries will soon adopt legal instruments for protecting these mountains.

The Alpine-Carpathian partnership proved that sustainable mountain development can be advanced considerably through regional and subregional initiatives, cooperation and actions.

In order to be successful and achieve lasting results, cooperation among mountain regions must address a great variety of interlinked issues in an integrated way: agriculture and forestry, energy and transport, landscape planning and water basin management, and sustainable tourism and biodiversity protection.

Partnerships such as the Alpine-Carpathian with the interaction among different actors have proven themselves to be useful approaches and powerful incentives for mountain-related actions as well as frameworks for the creation of sub-partnerships focussing on specific topics.

The achievement of such a broader implementation in the whole UNECE region of the principles of the integrated land resource management in the mountain areas would provide substantial benefits to their social and economic development.

Italy will continue to support such processes on the basis of its specific geographic situation and consolidated cooperation policy and I hope that on the basis of these initiatives and with your experiences we can build more and more effective partnerships.